

PICS: POOJA BHALLA AND NILESH WAIRKAR



The Palm Springs building on the Link Road in Malad (W) had serious safety lapses, the firefighters said

Massive fire in Malad bldg guts property worth lakhs

Not a single fire-fighting equipment inside the Palm Springs building was functional, say firefighters

Property worth lakhs of rupees was gutted in a fire in an eight-storey commercial building in Malad on Monday. No casualty was reported but the Fire Brigade officials said that they have issued a notice to the building owner and the power supply to the building – Palm Springs near Link Road -- has been cut off as it lacks adequate fire-fighting measures.

This incident is yet another reminder of the complete disregard for the fire safety norms in the city's buildings, both residential and commercial. A fireman said that he and his teammates were "shocked to find that not even a single fire-fighting equipment inside the building was functional".

Less than a month ago, a fire had broken out in Kenilworth Mall on the Linking Road in Bandra (W). A probe had revealed several illegal alterations, unattended cylinders on the terrace, and lack of adequate fire-fighting equipment.

As per the BMC's Disaster Management Cell records, the Palm Springs fire was reported at 11.56 am when smoke was seen

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A FIRE BRIGADE OFFICIAL

billowing out of one of the offices on the fifth floor. "Nobody was trapped inside as the occupants of the office quickly cleared the building," a fire department official said. Eight fire engines and five water tankers were rushed to the spot and the fire was completely doused around 2.20 pm. The fire officials said that the blaze was probably caused due to short-circuit.

Prima facie, there appears "serious laps-

es" on the part of the building owners, a fireman said. "The fire was controlled before it could spread to the other floors. The equipment in the office which caught fire was completely gutted while the adjoining offices also suffered minor damage," a fire official said.

The fire department has asked the Reliance Energy to cut off power supply to the building, and it has been declared 'dangerous for habitation'.

"Shockingly, we met with resistance from some of the people working in the building when we cut off the power supply. It is not feasible for the fire department to ensure that each and every building in the city maintains its fire equipment. Building owners must take this responsibility in order to avert tragedies," officials added.

In Monday's incident, fire alarms failed to go off and other equipment too couldn't be started. A worker claimed that he could have manually started the fire-fighting system but was not allowed to go to the basement area by the police. His claims are being verified, the fire officials said.

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